

### **Calls For Immediate Reforms At Agency That Regulates Big Oil**

[\(Click Here For A Video Clip Of The Hearing \)](#)

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan (FL-13), at a congressional hearing today, criticized the Interior Department’s Minerals and Management Service (MMS) for being “too cozy” with Big Oil. Buchanan questioned MMS’s Acting Director Bob Abbey about environmental waivers and missed inspections associated with the Deepwater Horizon oil rig that exploded in the Gulf of Mexico in April.

“The federal government was wrong to grant British Petroleum a categorical exemption from environmental reviews that should be required for all offshore rigs,” said Buchanan. “From what has happened, this was obviously a mistake that should never be repeated.”

The Washington Post reported that MMS granted BP a “categorical exclusion” from environmental impact analysis requirements for Deepwater Horizon and the Associated Press reported that since 2005, the Deep Horizon oil rig has missed 16 monthly inspections. “How can you let this happen?” asked Buchanan.

The Congressman questioned whether any failure by MMS to take proper safety precautions is related to its cozy relationship with Big Oil. An investigation by the Interior Department’s acting inspector general found staffers at MMS violated a number of federal regulations and ethics rules by taking gifts from oil and gas companies they were tasked with overseeing.

“MMS has a long history of controversial mismanagement—employees using drugs, viewing pornography at work, taking kickbacks from oil companies,” said Buchanan. “What steps is MMS taking to straighten up and fly right?”

“This is the largest environmental disaster in our nation’s history,” added the Congressman. “We have to make certain that circumstances that allowed this to happen are rectified

immediately.”

Buchanan questioned Abbey during a hearing held by the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure on the liability requirements for oil spills imposed by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA).